

City Council Work Session

Pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, Section 8 and Emergency Order #12, Section 3

July 20, 2020

At 6:30 p.m. Mayor Grenier opened the meeting. Due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04 this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to the meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, this is to confirm that we are:

- a) *Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video or other electronic means;*

We are utilizing the Zoom platform for this electronic meeting. All members of the Council have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through the Zoom platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone # 1-646-558-8656, meeting ID 886 6545 0314, Passcode 339189, or by clicking on the City Council agenda on the City's website, www.berlinnh.gov.

- b) *Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting:*

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting, including how to access the meeting using Zoom or telephonically. Instructions have been provided on the City of Berlin's website of the Council at City Council-agendas

- c) *Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access:*

If anybody has a problem, please call Pam Laflamme at 603-752-8587 or e-mail at: plaflamme@berlinnh.gov

- d) *Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting*

In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, we will adjourn the meeting and have it rescheduled at that time.

Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by Roll Call vote. By roll call, each member is to state their presence, and whether there is anyone in the room during this meeting, which is required under the Right to Know law.

Work Session

Present were: City Manager James Wheeler, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Community Development Director Pam Laflamme, Public Works Director Ben Hall, Fire Chief James Watkins, Recreation Director Terry

Letarte, Code Enforcement Michel Salek, Health Officer Angela Martin-Giroux, Denise Fortin, Roland Berthiaume, Corinne King, and Barbara Tetreault, Berlin Daily Sun.

Mayor Grenier called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Campground Presentation

Roland Berthiaume presented his plans for a 200-site campground, along with three commercial lots, and residential lots. Berthiaume advised he has received his permits and has invested approximately \$750,000 into the project, however the cost of the road makes the project not viable. The amount they would have to charge for lots, to cover the cost of the roadway, would be too high. Berthiaume asked if the City would be willing to help find a way to move forward, with assistance obtaining grant funds for the road. Councilor Rozek advised that there has been a lot of interest in that area, and City water and sewer come to the point across the street. Extending the water and sewer lines and improving the pumping station would be an investment for the City, but without a hard commitment it could be a disaster for taxpayers. City Manager Wheeler advised that the proposed development is private property, which makes it difficult to apply for grants. Extending water and sewer to all properties along Route 110 would be something grant money would be available for. If the road was given to the City of Berlin, it would have to go back to the Planning Board for approval, as approval was granted because it was a private road and not maintained by the City. If it was a city street, grants such as Northern Borders would be available, but not until the next round, which would be next summer. If approved, the money would be released after October of 2021, and construction would not begin until 2022. Mayor Grenier advised that the presentation was not about how to get this done, but if the Council would support a public/private partnership to develop the area. Councilor Eastman stated that the City would be investing in a new neighborhood and he would like to help find funding, as Berthiaume has already shown commitment to the project. Councilor Morgan advised she is 100% behind this if the City has the capability to support it. Councilor Higbee stated it is a wonderful concept, but would not want the City to maintain it unless we could be certain that money spent would come back to the city in taxes. The ideal situation would be to help privately fund the road. City Manager Wheeler advised winter maintenance would also need to be considered if it was a city street, with the current resources we have and the fact that we do not currently maintain that section of Route 110. Councilor Rozek pointed out that if it was developed, tax dollars would pay for that.

Recreation Assistant Position

Terry Letarte made a formal request to start the process to hire a Recreation Assistant. They money is in the budget, and she would like to find someone to start late September or early October to help with the winter season.

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second from Councilor Morgan, to allow the Recreation Department to hire a Recreation Assistant. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Mayor Grenier advised that he would like to remove the Armory from the Work Session Agenda and add a Tax Agreement.

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second from Councilor Morgan, to approve removing the Armory from the Work Session agenda and adding a Tax Agreement. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Sewer Abatements

Ben Hall advised the Council that there were three sewer abatement requests that were pending further information. Hall advised that all were asked to provide additional information, but only Normand Roy provided it. Hall stated that he contacted BWW in reference to Jules Chaloux, and was advised they are not on the running water program, however a portion of the water bill was abated for a leaky toilet. There was no contact information available for Claire Paine, and no further information was received from her.

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second from Councilor Higbee, to deny the abatement requests for Jules Chaloux at 5 Guilmette Street and Claire Paine at 238 Willard Street. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

For the abatement requested for Normand Roy at 1 Alice Street, Denise Fortin provided photos and an invoice for the repairs. The property was also given an abatement last year and Mayor Grenier advised that the homeowner will need to be sure to maintain the property, as the Council would not abate it again.

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second from Councilor Eastman, to grant a sewer abatement for Normand Roy of 1 Alice Street, to be billed in the amount of \$976.85.

Councilor Higbee mentioned that it is incumbent on the homeowner to watch for leaks and to install a water meter.

So moved, the motion passed by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Rozek – yes, Theberge – no, Remillard- yes, Otis – no, Morgan – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier – yes

Disposition of Tax Deeded Properties

A list of tax-deeded properties that are recommended to put out to bid was shared with the Council. Mayor Grenier asked about bid prices, and was advised the City can collect what is owed for taxes, water, and sewer, plus legal fees. Three of the properties are recommended as demolition. Michel Salek advised that 88 Wight Street has foundation issues, 56 Pershing Avenue has severe mold issues and the foundation is a mess, and 212 Glen Avenue is in shambles, there is no full foundation, boards are rotted through, and it is sagging. Councilor Remillard suggested that those properties be put out as demo, but if someone wanted to salvage it they could come back to the City with a plan for renovation. City Manager Wheeler advised the Wight Street property is commercially zoned. Pam Laflamme advised there has been interest in renovating 56 Pershing Avenue.

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second from Councilor Rozek, to put all of the recommended properties out to bid, with 212 Glen Avenue, 88 Wight Street, and 56 Pershing Avenue as demo for highest and best offer, and the remaining properties for the amount owed. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Rozek – yes, Theberge – no, Remillard- yes, Otis – yes, Morgan – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier – yes

Brown School

City Manager Wheeler advised that he recently contacted Fred Dambrie of Wildcat LLC, who was working on a proposal for the City for Brown School. Dambrie stated he is not currently in a position to make a proposal. Councilor Remillard suggested contacting the other interested party, which was New England Family Housing. Councilor Higbee stated that residents did not feel this would be a good fit for

the neighborhood. Pamela Laflamme advised that she will reconvene the Brown School Committee to make a recommendation to the Council.

Tax Agreement

City Manager Wheeler presented a Tax Agreement to the Council between the City and Robert and Lorraine Reed. The Reed's have agreed to pay \$86,058.76 to the City before the current State of Emergency is lifted. Due to the Governor's Emergency Orders 25 and 26 currently in place, tax agreements such as this are allowed. Mayor Grenier advised that this is a great opportunity for property owners to waive a significant portion of interest to get caught up on taxes. It was suggested that the availability of this option be advertised so that others can be allowed the same opportunity. Councilor Higbee agreed that it was nice to be able to give this opportunity when they legally have the chance. Councilor Morgan shared a concern that with some properties that are really far behind in taxes and in disarray, it would not be in the City's best interest to accept an agreement like this, which would just delay the tax deeding process.

Councilor Rozek moved, with a second from Councilor Higbee, to authorize the City Manager to execute the agreement with Robert and Lorraine Reed. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

At 7:54 pm, there being no further business in Work Session, Mayor Grenier moved on to the Regular Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Shelli Fortin
City Clerk

*Minutes are unofficial until they have been accepted by the City Council by motion.